WMI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

WMI SIGNATORIES

PUBLIC AGENCIES

California Department of Fish & Game

City of Cupertino

City of Palo Alto

City of San Jose

City of Santa Clara

City of Sunnyvale

Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District

San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board

Santa Clara County

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program

Santa Clara Valley Water District

US Army Corps of Engineers

US Environmental Protection Agency

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

BUSINESS/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

California Restaurant Association/Dairy Belle Freeze

Home Builders Association of Northern California

San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce

Santa Clara Cattleman's Association

Santa Clara County Farm Bureau

Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group

ENVIRONMENTAL & CIVIC GROUPS

CLEAN South Bay

League of Women Voters

Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Group

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

Santa Clara County Streams for Tomorrow

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Silicon Valley Pollution Prevention Center

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition

Western Waters Canoe Club

WMI BEGINS WATERSHED ASSESSMENTS

What is the WMI?

The Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative (WMI), initiated in 1996, is a collaborative effort of representatives from business and industrial sectors; professional and trade organizations; civic, environmental, resource conservation and agricultural groups; regional and local public agencies; and the general public. These groups have joined forces to address habitat and water quality protection and enhancement, water rights and water supply reliability; flood management; regulatory compliance; land use and public awareness and involvement. With a vested interest in future basin management and health, these participants are committed to improving basin conditions. Participants help manage the WMI through monthly Core Group meetings, where they determine priorities and apply resources to meet agreed-upon goals (see Goals, on reverse). A major aim of the WMI is to coordinate existing watershed activities on a basin-wide scale, ensuring that environmental protection efforts are addressed efficiently and cost-effectively. On Earth Day 1999, the groups listed on the left signed a participation agreement, demonstrating their commitment to the WMI.

First "Suite" of Watersheds Selected

One goal of the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative (WMI) is to develop a Watershed Management Plan that will allow the stakeholders to better protect and sustain the South Bay's natural resources. The first step in the process is to complete a scientific assessment of conditions in the Santa Clara Basin. Due to the large size of the Basin and its complexity of issues, it is impractical to study the entire watershed at once. To target stakeholder resources, the WMI will study a "suite" of three watersheds that together include the uses, characteristics, and conditions of the entire Basin. In addition, the WMI will incorporate the work of the San Francisco Bay Area Wetlands Ecosystem Goals Project (Wetlands Goals Project) to assess the Baylands. Baylands are the areas of the bay found between the lines of high and low tide. Baylands contain several types of valuable wetlands habitat.

The initial suite of watersheds are San Francisquito Creek, Guadalupe River, and Upper Penitencia Creek. Some of the uses of these waterbodies include fish spawning and migration, wildlife habitat, warm and cold freshwater habitat, drinking water supply, and recreation. All of the three watersheds are identified as key flood protection areas.

When the assessment of the initial suite of watersheds is complete, the WMI will continue with additional suites of watersheds. The goal is to assess the entire basin. The assessments will be the foundation for the watershed action plan, which will be used to meet the goals of the WMI. Stakeholders are working together to conduct the assessments and develop the action plan recommendations. The first assessment report is scheduled for the fall of 2001.

San Francisquito Creek

San Francisquito Creek is located on the east side of the Santa Cruz mountains and forms the boundary between Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. It drains from the western hills to South San Francisco Bay, south of the Dumbarton Bridge. Major land uses include commercial and residential areas, grazing lands, Stanford University, and a biological preserve.

Guadalupe River

The headwaters of the Guadalupe River originate in the Santa Cruz Mountains near the summit of Loma Prieta. The Guadalupe River watershed encompasses a major urban corridor, flowing through Los Gatos, Campbell and San Jose. It is the second largest drainage area in the Santa Clara Basin (146 square miles, or 20 percent of the total). Major land uses in this watershed include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open space lands in the upper watershed.

Upper Penitencia Creek

Upper Penitencia Creek is located in the Diablo Range, on the east side of the Santa Clara Basin. The creek flows through Cherry Flat Reservoir, Alum Rock Park, and residential neighborhoods, eventually joining Coyote Creek. Major land uses within the watershed include parklands, open space, agricultural, and residential.

The assessment will also assist local stakeholders and the Santa Clara Valley Water District to develop a flood management project for the Creek.

Current activities in these watersheds

The San Francisquito Creek Coordinated Resource Management and Planning process (CRMP) supports numerous activities in the watershed. These activities include volunteer water quality monitoring, and regular creek clean-up events. The CRMP is working with Bay Area Action, a Peninsula group that emphasizes environmental restoration and preservation, to restore portions of the lower creek. The project uses volunteers to remove invasive non-native plants and replace them with native riparian species.

On the Guadalupe River, a project called the Santa Clara County Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Collaborative Effort (FAHCE) is currently leading an effort to restore runs of chinook salmon and steelhead trout. Stakeholders include the Guadalupe-Coyote Natural Resources Conservation District, Santa Clara Valley Water District, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Water Resources Control Board, National Marine Fisheries Service, City of San Jose, and the Natural Heritage Institute.

Concern for the future of the Upper Penitencia Creek watershed sparked the interest of a group of teachers and local residents, who formed the Friends of Upper Penitencia Creek. The goals of the group include stewardship of the creek, increasing awareness and appreciation of the creek, conducting creek clean-ups and creek walks, and working closely with local elementary schools to incorporate the creek into local classroom curriculum.